



## First Conversations Interfaith and Aboriginal Bridging Project

Connecting Cultures ([www.healthandsocialdevelopment.com](http://www.healthandsocialdevelopment.com)) facilitated an interfaith project last year called, "Seeing It Through Your Eyes". This project involved five diverse faith communities including the Congregation Emanu-El (Jewish Community), Our Lady of Fatima (Portuguese Catholic), the Victoria Hindu Temple, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and the Victoria Baha'i Community. Each community hosted a dialogue meeting to answer five questions, share food and provide time for sharing amongst the audience. Each community also provided two artists to produce one piece of art per community session. However, one faith community could not provide two artist so two First Nations artists were chosen to participate. At the end of the project an art show showcasing all the interfaith art work was held in St. Luke's Hall in March. Throughout the project people were interested in connecting more with First Nations people and so the idea for this year's interfaith project was germinated.

This year's inter-faith project, entitled "First Conversations", is funded by the government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia under EmbraceBC ([www.embracebc.ca](http://www.embracebc.ca)). The purpose of this project is to provide safe opportunities for First Peoples and diverse faith communities to share their spirituality, culture, and language with each other. Each Aboriginal and faith community commits to hosting a "First Conversation" meeting. Each group will also commit to promote and attend the other communities' "First Conversation" meetings. These meetings will focus on the following questions:

- What five things would you like others to know about your community?
- How does your community support members dealing with racism and oppression?
- How does your community actively engage in decreasing racism in the South Island?
- How does your community provide healing to those that are in need of support?
- In what ways does your community celebrate or express spirituality/culture?

Each community meeting will last approximately three hours including a time for people to ask questions and mingle with one another. A meal or snacks will be provided at each gathering by each group. The faith communities and the Aboriginal peoples participating in this project, along with the confirmed dates for hosting their dialogue sessions, are:

- Métis Nation – Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> – 5:30 - 8:30 pm with dinner - Victoria Native Friendship Centre, 231 Regina Avenue.
- Sacred Heart Catholic Church – Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup> – 11:00 am - 2:00 pm with lunch – 4040 Nelthorpe Street.
- St. Luke Cedar Hill Anglican Church – Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9:30 am - 12:30 pm with lunch – 3821 Cedar Hill Cross Road.
- Quakers – Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup> – 1:00 - 3:30 pm with refreshments – The Friends Meeting Hall – 1831 Fern Street.
- Victoria Hindu Temple – Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> – 1:00 - 3:30 pm with lunch – 1934 Cultra Avenue.
- T'Sou-Ke/Esquimalt First Nation – Date TBA
- Tsawout First Nation – Date TBA
- There is also the Truth and Reconciliation Regional Event on April 13 – 14<sup>th</sup> (Friday and Saturday). For more information please visit the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada ([www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca)). All faith communities, Aboriginal peoples and the general public are encouraged to attend this event.